

HYGIENE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

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(Continued from Vol. III., page 953)

THE trained nurse who devotes her time to nursing in private families will be called upon to solve many complicated questions that do not come into the pathway of her sister who nurses along the lines of order and regulation to be found in all institutional work.

Perhaps a few suggestions on the all-important "servant question" may be found of value to the young nurses as they start out in the world to prove how much their hospital training has moulded and strengthened their characters.

As I showed in a former paper, tact is of supreme importance in the establishment of a successful career in private nursing, and nowhere is it called in question so often and to such a large extent as in the attitude of the nurse to the servants of her patient's household.

One of the fundamental truths we learn in our hospital training is to wait upon ourselves, and yet this rule is often forgotten or put aside the moment a nurse assumes the responsibility of her "first case."

I don't in the least advocate the nurse putting herself on a footing with the servants, assuming any of their duties, or allowing herself to be considered on their level, but many nurses err sadly when beginning their work by following the idea that they may order the servants hither and yon (as they might in their own homes), and yet expect them to be polite and obliging.

The mere advent of sickness into a family always creates extra work, and the larger share falls upon the servants, who are thus disturbed in their regular routine.

In the homes of the wealthy, where large staffs of servants are employed, the nurse will often find it good policy to accept their services, even when not absolutely necessary; but in such homes the maids expect to wait on the nurse, and frequently give her as much personal attention as if she were a guest.

Again, we enter families where one or two maids have all the work on their shoulders, and in consequence often resent the smallest task that would add to their burden, and here the nurse will show what her true character is.

One of our famous surgeons told me that he was obliged to dispense with the services of one of his best nurses because she caused trouble with the servants in almost every house she entered.

The nurse should make it a rule to wait upon herself as far as lies in her power, and when she does call upon the servants for help to do so in a gracious, pleasant manner, as if she were asking a favor, at the same time keeping a dignified distinction between herself and them; in this way she will command their respect and find that her tact and winning manner has oiled the troubled waters caused by her appearance.

Some nurses are afraid their dignity will be hurt or their position lowered if they are called upon for any service that could not strictly be classed under the head of "nursing," though, for the matter of that, there are few nurses who will not at some time be obliged to undertake a large variety of tasks in the homes of their various patients entirely outside the pale of actual nursing, from the hunting up and engaging of servants, to assuming the entire responsibility of the household during the illness of the mistress.

In one country home to which I was called the maid-of-all-work fell ill, and for some days I found it necessary to nurse the maid as well as the mistress, and to do all the housework until the former was on her feet again.

Indeed, the term "trained-nurse" is generally considered to be of most elastic proportions, and to cover almost any task that a well-educated, tactful, obliging woman is capable of accomplishing.

But to return to the servant question: In many homes there dwells "a family treasure" in the shape of an elderly female who has grown gray in the service of the house and is somewhat of an autocrat to all the household, the master and mistress not excepted. Sad it is for the trained nurse if she fail to propitiate this dignitary, who frequently will be absurdly jealous of anyone but herself caring for her mistress, and it calls for an infinite amount of patience and forbearance on the part of the nurse to keep the peace and prevent her patient noticing any disturbance in the domestic economy. This confidential servant has, as a rule, authority over the other servants, and it is within her power to do hosts of things to make the life of the nurse—outside the sickroom—miserable.

Several times I have encountered this type of upper servant, but always—with one exception—was enabled to win them over to my side. The exception was an elderly female much resembling the time-honored "Miss Miggs" that Dickens has immortalized in "Barnaby Rudge." As her young mistress and I—contrary to the good advice bestowed upon young nurses—became fast friends, her dislike of me grew to positive hatred, and she triumphed in the art of making me unhappy. I was determined, however, that my patient should not be troubled, so held my own counsel and treated my adversary with (apparent) indifference.

But these cases are rare, and it usually depends entirely upon the nurse how she is treated by the servants. Her position is a little difficult; not being a guest nor a regular member of the household, appearing at a time of trouble and general upsetting of the family life, it is by the strength of her personal character that she will create her own place in the family life, where she is often treated nowadays as an honored guest and—with rare exceptions—always as a lady.

(To be continued.)

HOME ECONOMICS

By ALICE P. NORTON

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(Continued from Vol. III., page 448)

[In the last volume we published four of what we promised should be a series of articles entitled "Home Economics," by Mrs. Alice P. Norton, assistant professor of home economics of the School of Education, University of Chicago. Owing to pressure of university work Mrs. Norton was unable to continue these papers at that time,—the last number appearing in March,—but she begins them again with the assurance that the series shall be completed without another break.—Ed.]

V. PROTEIDS AND THEIR USES CONTINUED

If it be true, as Mrs. Richards has said, that "the prosperity of a nation depends upon the health and the morals of its citizens, and the health and the morals of a people depend mainly upon the food they eat and the homes they live in," the right selection of food becomes of the utmost importance. The various uses of food must be recognized and the nature and function of the different food principles studied that the proportions needed under varying conditions of age, activity, and climate may be ascertained.

The body differs from the ordinary machine, to which it is so often compared, in that it not only needs fuel to produce heat, partly utilized as heat and partly transformed into work, internal and external, but it must also obtain building material to provide for its own growth and to repair the waste that is constantly going on.

This latter function can be fulfilled only by one class of foods, the proteids, while these can also act as fuel foods. It is this fact which gives the proteids so great importance that we largely estimate the "value" of a food by the amount of protein that it contains.

Childhood, the age of growth, especially demands food containing